



# C O N N E C T I C U T

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## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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### **Roraback, Chapin Announce Clean Water Legislation**

*Legislators join clean water advocates in effort to limit the use of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers and add phosphorus clean-up to the qualifying criteria for Clean Water funding*

LITCHFIELD, CT – State Senator Andrew Roraback (R-30) and State Representative Clark Chapin (R-67), the ranking members on the General Assembly’s Environment Committee, joined a host of clean water advocates at Bantam Lake today to propose legislation that would limit the use of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers and add phosphorus clean-up to the qualifying criteria for the Clean Water Fund.

Excessive phosphorus is the main factor contributing to the decline of Connecticut’s lakes and ponds. High levels of phosphorus lead to excessive algae and aquatic plant growth, reduced water clarity and depleted oxygen levels – all detrimental to the health of these water bodies and the fish and humans who depend on them. Eleven states currently ban or restrict the use of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers to reduce the threat. Senator Roraback and Representative Chapin are seeking to make Connecticut the 12<sup>th</sup>.

“Given Connecticut’s large number of important lakes and rivers, we are overdue in taking on this important issue. Eleven other states already ban or restrict phosphorus fertilizer use or sale and we should act now to join them as we continue to protect and improve water quality in Connecticut.” **said Senator Roraback.**

“The far-reaching benefits that our lakes, rivers, and streams provide in our state can’t be overstated,” Representative Chapin said. “Their health is integral to the financial vitality of so many cities and towns whose local economies rely heavily on the industries tied to them—from bait shops and breakfast spots to seasonal tourism businesses and antique shops on our main streets,” **said Representative Chapin**

The bill would limit the use of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers by:

- prohibiting the application of phosphorus fertilizers to established lawns;
- requiring a 20-foot setback from any water body for any application of phosphorus;
- prohibiting the use of phosphorus fertilizer between Nov. 15 and April 1; and
- requiring that phosphorus fertilizers to be segregated from other fertilizers at retail and have educational signs displayed prominently at the point of sale.

If passed, the new law will be enforced by Department of Agriculture and penalties will range from \$100 - \$1000. The legislation exempts golf courses, commercial and sod farms, and agricultural lands and production.

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The legislators will seek a public hearing on their proposed legislation to garner official testimony from concerned citizens and clean water advocates, as well as the agriculture and golf course industries and work to balance appropriate exemptions with environmental considerations.

States with similar restrictions include Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. Florida restricts phosphorus fertilizers in certain counties and municipalities. And a bill limiting the use of phosphorus fertilizers is pending in the Massachusetts legislature.

In addition to restricting the use of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers, Senator Roraback and Representative Chapin are proposing to allow municipalities to access Clean Water Funding for the purpose of cleaning-up existing phosphorus problems.

The process by which a body of water becomes overly enriched with phosphorus resulting in the depletion of dissolved oxygen is called eutrophication. Eutrophic lakes appear green and stagnant, often with a thick, odorous surface scum that looks like an oil slick. The lack of oxygen caused by this process kills off fish and other organisms. Eutrophication due to the unnecessary application of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus is a chief culprit of the decline in Connecticut's lakes and ponds.

The new legislation would add phosphorus clean-up to the qualifying criteria for Clean Water funding and allow a municipality to receive grants equal to 30% of the project costs associated with phosphorus removal, and 20% grants on the balance of eligible project costs. Municipalities with phosphorus problems would also receive additional "priority points" in the grading criteria for Clean Water funding similar to the points earned for nitrogen reduction.

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